

WHAT THE CONVERTS INTRODUCED

794 It is quite impossible to establish now what these converts intro-
177 duced individually. For that matter it is not necessary to assume
that they brought any specific additions to the cult. What they did
bring were Winnebago; and with that, the emotional and cultural
setting of the old pagan background. To one, the eating of the
peyote gave the same magical powers that were formerly associated
with membership in the medicine dance; to another, the visions were
direct blessings from God, directing him to perform certain actions;
to a third, faithfulness to the teachings of the Peyote cult became
associated with a certainty of reaching God, of being able to take the
right road in the journey to the spirit land. Even a man so thor-
oughly saturated with Christian doctrines as Hensley himself felt it
necessary to introduce an origin myth; and although we know that
he borrowed it from a southern tribe, it is quite clear that in Hensley's
narrative it has already assumed all the characteristics of a Winne-
bago fasting experience and ritualistic myth, similar to those con-
nected with the founders of the old Winnebago cult societies. In its
totality the atmosphere of the Peyote cult became thus charged with
the old Winnebago background. In 1911 it can not be said that they
had displaced the distinctive Christian elements. Among the younger
members, especially those who had been trained in the east and could
read and write English, the influence of the Christian ideas in the
interpretation of the old pagan features is, as was pointed out before,
so strong to-day that it threatens to displace the others.

The following homily will show how the old myths were used by
the younger Peyote members to point a tale.

794 The old people often spoke of the Trickster, but we never knew
773 what they meant. They told us how he wrapped a coon-skin blanket
around himself and went to a place where all the people were dancing.
There he danced until evening and then he stopped and turned
around. No one was to be seen anywhere, and then he realized that
he had mistaken for people dancing the noise made by the wind blowing
through the reeds.

[181
829] So do we Winnebagos act. We dance and make a lot of noise, but
in the end, we accomplish nothing.

Once, as the Trickster was going toward a creek, he saw a man
standing on the other side, dressed in a black suit, and pointing his
finger at him. He spoke to the man but the latter would not answer.
Then he spoke again and again, but without receiving any reply.
Finally he got angry and said, "See here! I can do that too." He put
on the black coat and pointed his finger across the creek. Thus both
of them stood all day. Toward evening, when he looked around again,
he noticed that the man across the creek, pointing his finger at him,
was really just a tree stump. "O my! what have I been doing all

Cultural Change

124

individually bestowed upon members of the conservative group.

182
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The list of old Indian traits still found among the Wisconsin Winnebago could be extended at great length to include items of diet, clothing, religion, amusements, healing, social organization, and many other aspects of the culture, but of course cannot all be discussed in this article. There is, nevertheless, one final and important feature, and that is that the Indian definitely considers himself a member of a distinct race, and that differences in white and Indian outlook are inherent in the blood rather than due to societal processes.

182

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Conclusion

From observation of current trends and from the reminiscences of informants, it seems safe to conclude that the pattern of change outlined above will be followed in coming years with an ever-increasing tendency of the Winnebago to take on more and more of the aspects of white culture. Naturally changes vary from community to community, but the overall picture of the forms of cultural change seems to hold true.

178

There is one important point which may affect the Winnebago in unforeseen ways, and that is the present war. As far as influencing cultural change today, it is more of a nuisance than an acting force. True the Indians are notably patriotic in the purchase of war bonds, and Indian boys are in all of the fighting forces; but for the most part, except where tragedy strikes individual families, the Indian thinks of the war as apart from his affairs. Some older people still feel strongly about the irony of Indians fighting for a country they themselves already have lost.

178

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There is, of course, the inconvenience of tire and gasoline rationing on a people who lead a semi-nomadic life, but in our group, as far as the writer could ascertain, this did not constitute a great problem.

Many Indians have begun working in defense factories since the outbreak of the war, but even then they manage to stay in fairly isolated groups, as witness the Badger Ordnance Plant,